

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-01 USIE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10
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O 131500Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1778

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 GABORONE 0715

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP BC (PRESIDENT SIR SERETSE KHAMA)
SUBJ: PRESIDENT KHAMA'S VISIT TO U.S.

REF: (A) GABORONE 0650, (B) GABORONE 0379

1. SUMMARY: HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S DECISION TO AWARD AN HONORARY DEGREE TO PRESIDENT SIR SERETSE KHAMA AT COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES JUNE 8 PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT OCCASION FOR THE USG TO SHARE IN HONORING A LEADER WHOSE POLICIES AND ACTIONS EXEMPLIFY THE PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERLIE US POLICIES IN AFRICA. WE BELIEVE A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD DO MUCH TO ENCOURAGE AND STRENGTHEN THOSE PRINCIPLES AND SO STRONGLY RECOMMEND IT. FOR THE SAME REASONS WE URGE THAT APPOINTMENTS BE ARRANGED WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE, SECRETARY VANCE AND THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRESIDENT KHAMA'S WISHES. THIS MESSAGE SETS FORTH SALIENT CONSIDERATION IN SUPPORT OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS. END SUMMARY

2. RATIONALE. IN OUR VIEW, THE MEETINGS WITH PRES CARTER AND OTHER RANKING US OFFICIALS WOULD SERVE THREE OVERARCHING US POLICY OBJECTIVES:

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(A) RECOGNIZE BOTSWANA'S RECORD OF CONSTITUTIONAL PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM AND MAJORITY RULE;

(B) SHOW SUPPORT FOR KHAMA'S NON-RACIALISM AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS; AND

(C) AFFIRM US MATERIAL ASSISTANCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

SUPPORT TO A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT.

3. PRINCIPLES. MEETINGS WITH PRES KHAMA AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE USG WOULD ENABLE US TO PROMOTE AND STRENGTHEN CERTAIN BROAD CONCERNS.

(A) THE FIRST, I.E. DEMOCRACY AND MAJORITY RULE, IS THE UNDERLYING ISSUE IN ALL THREE CRISIS AREAS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA: RHODESIA, NAMIBIA AND SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF. THESE THREE COUNTRIES ARE BOTSWANA'S NEIGHBORS WITH SOME 2300 MILES OF COMMON BORDER. DESPITE THE TURMOIL ACCOMPANYING EVOLUTION IN THESE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES TO MAJORITY RULE, BOTSWANA'S UNIQUENESS STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT IT ESTABLISHED DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT UPON ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE AND HAS SUCCEEDED IN MAINTAINING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES, NON-RACIALISM, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ELECTIONS, A CONSTITUTIONAL MULTI-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM AND THE RULE OF LAW DESPITE THE TENSIONS AND TRAUMA OF TERRORISM IN NEARBY COUNTRIES THAT HAS REJECTED BOTSWANA ITSELF. BOTSWANA IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS A MODEL OF WHAT WE ARE HOPING TO ACHIEVE IN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA; ITS PATIENCE AND MODERATION VIS-A-VIS SOUTH AFRICA, ALTHOUGH ACCOMPANIED BY STRONG OBJECTION TO APARTHEID, IS ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH US POLICY. AT A TIME OF INCREASING MILITANCY AND CALLS FOR ARMED STRUGGLE

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AMONG SOUTHERN AFRICAN BLACKS (IN RETALIATION FOR WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS UNWILLINGNESS OF WHITE MINORITY REGIMES TO SHARE POLITICAL POWER), IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO ENCOURAGE AND AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF A RESPECTED LEADER LIKE PRES KHAMA IN SUPPORT OF PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS REACHED BY EVOLUTIONARY MEANS.

(B) NON-RACIALISM. THIS IS A CONCEPT OF GROWING UNPOPULARITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THROUGHOUT THE AREA THERE IS EVIDENCE OF MILITANCY ACCOMPANIED BY INCREASING POLARIZATION ALONG RACIAL LINES. SOUTH AFRICA'S SO-CALLED HOMELANDS POLICY AND APPARENT INTRANSIGENCY ON THE BASIC ISSUE OF POWER-SHARING WITH BLACKS, HAS FORCED PROPONENTS OF RACIAL COOPERATION INTO A DEFENSIVE POSTURE. SIR SERETSE KHAMA REMAINS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO NON-RACIALISM, A PRINCIPLE STRONGLY SUPPORTED IN THE GOB AND EMBODIED IN THE COUNTRY'S CONSTITUTION. WITH FORCES OF RACISM GATHERING MOMENTUM LIKE A "VOLCANO ON THE VERGE OF ERUPTION" (REF B), PRES KHAMA'S NON-RACIALISM MERITS ENCOURAGEMENT. TO BE EFFECTIVE SUCH SUPPORT MUST BE DISCREET. US MOTIVES IN ADVOCATING NON-RACIALISM ARE

WIDELY SUSPECT AT PRESENT AS A FORM OF PROTECTION FOR
US INVESTMENTS (E.G., IN SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA);
OUR SUPPORT CAN THEREFORE MOST APPROPRIATELY BE MADE
KNOWN INDIRECTLY, E.G., BY HONORING PRES KHAMA
PERSONALLY. APPOINTMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH
PRESIDENT CARTER, VP MONDALE AND SECRETARY VANCE ARE
PERHAPS THE BEST MEANS AVAILABLE TO US OF ENHANCING
PRES KHAMA'S STANDING, INCLUDING HIS DEDICATION TO
THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF NON-RACIALISM.

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1779

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 GABORONE 0715
RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. BOTSWANA'S RECORD ON
RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS IMPECCABLE, INCLUDING
RESPECT FOR INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, GOVERNMENT EFFORTS
TO FULFILL VITAL HUMAN NEEDS AND RESPECT FOR CIVIL
AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES. THESE CONCEPTS ARE BY NO
MEANS ACCEPTED OR ADHERED TO IN THIS PART OF AFRICA --
OR INDEED IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF COUNTRIES IN THE
WORLD. BOTSWANA IS ON THE VERY SHORT LIST OF COUNTRIES
WHICH HAS NO POLITICAL PRISONERS, MAINTAINS EFFECTIVE
SAFEGUARDS AGAINST ARBITRARY ARREST OR DETENTION, AND
IS FREE OF CORRUPTION. THE CONTRAST WITH THE SITUATION
IS PARTICULARLY NOTABLE IN SURROUNDING COUNTRIES WHERE
DETENTION LAWS ARE EMPLOYED TO INCARCERATE PERSONS FOR
LONG PERIODS WITHOUT EXPLANATION OR HEARING. TO HONOR
THE PERSON OF SIR SERETSE KHAMA IS ONE OF THE BEST
MEANS AVAILABLE TO UNDERLINE OUR IDENTITY OF VIEWS IN
THIS SENSITIVE AREA AND TO INDICATE OUR ADMIRATION AND
SUPPORT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES.

(C) MATERIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT. A KHAMA-

CARTER MEETING WOULD BE THE OCCASION TO REVIEW RECENT
USG INITIATIVES TO PROVIDE MATERIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
SUPPORT TO GOB. AMONG THESE PROPOSALS ARE (A) AN AID
PROGRAM GRANT IN FY 78 OF \$8-\$10 MILLION AND ASSISTANCE
TO TRANSPORTATION SECTOR IN FY 78; (B) VOA TRANSMITTER
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TO BE LOCATED AT SELEBI-PIKWE (200 MILES NORTH OF
GABORONE) FOR JOINT US/GOB USE; AND (C) CONSULAR
CONVENTION, DRAFT OF WHICH WAS TRANSMITTED TO GOB ON
MARCH 10. ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND AND SUGGESTED TALKING
POINTS ON THESE AND OTHER POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS AND
ISSUES WILL BE SENT SEPTEL UPON CONFIRMATION THAT
APPOINTMENTS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND OTHER TOP
OFFICIALS WILL BE POSSIBLE.

4. OTHER. THERE ARE OTHER LESS TANGIBLE REASONS THAT
LEAD US TO URGE THAT MAXIMUM EFFORT BE MADE TO ARRANGE
A SUITABLE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT KHAMA AND
PRESIDENT CARTER AND OTHER RANKING US OFFICIALS. FIRST,
PRES KHAMA IS 56 YEARS OLD. SINCE HIS LAST VISIT TO
THE US IN 1976, HE HAS HAD A PACEMAKER INSTALLED AND
TWICE HAD MINOR SURGERY IN AN EFFORT TO GET IT TO WORK
PROPERLY. HEALING HAS BEEN COMPLICATED BY DIABETES,
WHICH ALSO LIMITS KHAMA'S ACTIVITY AND DIET. IN SHORT,
HIS HEALTH, WHILE PRESENTLY GOOD, IS SOMEWHAT PRECARIOUS.
IT IS ONLY REALISTIC TO ASSUME THAT THIS MIGHT WELL BE
HIS LAST TRIP TO THE US. SECOND, GENERAL ELECTIONS,
WHICH ARE HELD EVERY FIVE YEARS, ARE SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER
1979, THERE ARE PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1780

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 GABORONE 0715

PRES KHAMA INTENDS TO CAMPAIGN HARD FOR HIS PARTY AND THEN RETIRE AFTER THAT ELECTION. THE CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL EFFORT HE IS INVESTING IN STRENGTHENING HIS PARTY, E.G., ENCOURAGING GRASS-ROOTS VOTER REGISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION BY YOUTH, IS WIDELY REGARDED AS PART OF A BROADER OBJECTIVE OF ASSURING AN ORDERLY, DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION TO A SUCCESSOR. HE IS AWARE OF AFRICA'S DISMAL RECORD ON THIS SCORE; HE IS DETERMINED TO SHOW THAT DEMOCRACY IS TRULY INSTITUTIONALIZED IN BOTSWANA. ONCE THIS HAS BEEN DONE, HE WOULD LIKE TO ENJOY HIS UNCONCEALED PREFERENCE FOR THE TRANQUILITY AND COMFORT OF LIFE ON ONE OR MORE OF HIS FARMS AND TO LEAVE THE PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF LIFE IN THE CAPITAL. AMONG ALL WHO KNOW PRES KHAMA BEST, IT IS BEYOND QUESTION THAT THIS IS A GENUINE SENTIMENT ON HIS PART, NOT MOCK MODESTY OR PHONY DISAVOWAL OF AMBITION WHICH MIGHT BE USED TO PERPETUATE HIS RULE. (FROM MY OWN CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM, I CAN ATTEST TO BOTH HIS DESIRE TO DIVEST HIMSELF OF POWER AFTER NEARLY TWELVE YEARS AS PRESIDENT AND HIS INTEREST IN COUNTRY LIFE.) FOR THIS REASON AS WELL, WE CAN EXPECT WITH SOME CERTAINTY THAT THIS WOULD BE PRES KHAMA'S LAST OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE US AS HEAD OF STATE.

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5. CONCLUSION: THERE IS AN AGENDA OF ACTIVE ISSUES IN US-GOB RELATIONS THAT WOULD BENEFIT GREATLY FROM MEETINGS BETWEEN PRESIDENTS KHAMA AND CARTER, AS WELL AS OTHER RANKING US OFFICIALS. BY SUCH MEETINGS, WE WOULD ALSO BE PROMOTING AND ADVANCING US POLICIES, PRINCIPLES AND INTERESTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND IN THE WORLD. MEETINGS WOULD ENABLE US TO AFFIRM OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT KHAMA WITH WHOM WE HAVE A COMMON ATTACHMENT TO PRINCIPLES OF ACHIEVING CHANGE BY PEACEFUL MEANS, TO DEMOCRACY, CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE RULE OF LAW, NON-RACIALISM AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. A MEETING THIS YEAR IS ALSO INDICATED BECAUSE OF HIS PROBLEMATIC HEALTH AND RELIABLE INDICATIONS THAT PRESIDENT KHAMA MAY RETIRE AFTER NEXT YEAR'S GENERAL ELECTIONS.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT THE DEPARTMENT SEEK TO ARRANGE A MEETING FOR PRES KHAMA WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND OTHER RANKING USG OFFICIALS.

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